

*Mr. of the  
Chair*

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee,

EXHIBIT 23

DATE 1/22/09

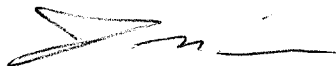
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Our daughter, Devan Elizabeth arrived on the morning of April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2008. Within the first hour after her birth, our doctor explained that it appeared Devan had Down syndrome. Our minds went into hyper-speed since we knew absolutely nothing about Down syndrome or who was available to help us learn about the diagnosis. Our first stop on our way home was the Barnes and Noble bookstore to find any educational books available. After reading about Down syndrome and the common complications that occur, we were terrified. Our doctor admitted that he had no experience treating children with Down syndrome. We felt very alone in our search for answers. After searching online for resources, we came across the Family Outreach website and set up an appointment. Family Outreach has since become our most important resource.

Loving Devan is the easy part. Family Outreach has been available to help us with the many additional details that are required to properly care for Devan. They help pay for a portion of Devan's therapy costs. They've also helped pay for some of the screening tests needed to ensure Devan's heart, ears and eyes were developing properly. While the financial aid is not a lot, it certainly helps considering the large amount of therapy costs not covered by our insurance policy. It also helps with the indirect costs associated with taking time away from our careers for therapy and doctor visits. Our Family Support Specialist, Rebecca Adams, has given us resources to help understand the complex insurance dilemmas we face and regarding special needs trusts to financially protect Devan's future. Rebecca helps us create plans of action to make sure Devan is on the right path towards a fulfilling life. We feel that this early intervention is vital to ensure Devan can be independent during her adult years.

After research and numerous calls to Down syndrome associations across the country, it is apparent that Montana's programs for children with special needs is already lacking. Amber and I support a fully funded Part C (early intervention) so that entitlement won't take resources from other programs. If it weren't for the current economic crisis, we would be strongly in favor of a major funding increase for this important program. We also believe that child and family providers should not have missed out on the funding increase for improved wages given to similar programs. Rebecca has been an essential resource; it would be a great loss for us and many other families if an insufficient program budget caused her to pursue other career paths. Putting unqualified persons into her job role for the purpose of cutting budgets may prove to be a risky short term solution with long term consequences for many Montana families.

Regards,



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